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RELATIONS OF JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES

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It is now nearly sixty years since the modern history of Japan began. The arrival of Commodore Perry at Kurihama, the downfall of the Shogun and the restoration of the Mikado mark the point of transition from feudal Japan to the Japan of today.

In all this period, the Japanese nation has been the subject of intense interest to the cultivated people of America and a warm sympathy has arisen between those people of each nation who have come to understand the character and the ideals of the other. This sympathy has been kept alive by the influence of Japanese students in America on the one hand, and on the other by the interest of those who have gone as missionaries, as teachers or advisors in the affairs of Japan.

In Asia, there has existed for many years, a division of the non-Japanese into two sharply defined parties or one may say, attitudes of mind, the pro-Japanese and the anti-Japanese. The disputes of these two types of people have not come to our notice until very lately. Till within the last decade, American influence was almost wholly ranged with the pro-Japanese. Contributory to this fact was our general tendency toward sympathetic interest in a nation which rose to constitutional government through influences from within. The Shimonoseki incident, the visit of General Grant, the aid of the United States in setting aside the obnoxious consular jurisdiction in the treaty ports, all these became expressions of the friendly attitude of America.

The Japanese question, as it is now called, first rose to the horizon in 1899, the year of the abrogation of consular jurisdiction.

The need of cheap labor on the sugar plantations of Hawaii was great and constant. Kalakaua, the king, had

tried to meet this need by "blackbirding" expeditions among the islands of Polynesia. The steamship companies followed by strenuous efforts among the laborers in the rice fields of the region about the inland Sea of Japan, the districts of Okayama, Hiroshima and Yamaguchi. By their insistence and by offers of real wages their emigration agencies brought to Hawaii many men from the lowest stratum in Japanese life, next to the criminal and the outcast—the unskilled and homeless laborers in the rice fields. These have been called coolies, but their position in Japan was quite different from that of the coolies or half slaves of the continent of Asia.

These laborers were treated essentially as slaves in Hawaii. They carried with them none of the culture of Japan, they received none in their new homes. They did not go as colonists. The Japanese with homes do not willingly leave these homes where "their own customs fit them like a garment," to form new ones in another region. The Japanese are not spontaneously colonists. They will go to other lands for study or for trade or for higher wages. But they go with the hope to return. The coolies went to Hawaii solely under the incentive of higher wages.

When Hawaii was annexed to the United States, the shackles of their slavery were thrown off, and the same impulse of higher wages carried them on to San Francisco, Seattle and Vancouver.

In 1899, Mr. W. W. Scott of Honolulu, a former resident of Japan, warned the Japanese authorities of the dangers involved in this movement of Japanese laborers to California. Their lower standard of living and of wages would make them exploitable. This would bring them in conflict with labor unions. Economic clash would beget race prejudice, and Japan could not afford to be judged by her least attractive and least efficient representatives. Influenced by these and similar considerations the Japanese government in 1899, refused passports to all unskilled laborers, and since that time none have come from Japan direct to the Pacific States.

But in response to the continuous demand of Hawaii

they were for a time allowed to go there. Japanese people already constituted the great majority of the population of these islands. Even after passports were refused to laborers going to Hawaii, the immigration of coolies from Hawaii to San Francisco still continued.

There was and is a very great demand for Japanese help among the orchardists of California. No other labor has been adequate and available and it is not easy to see what the fruit interests are to do without Japanese help. In this work, the European laborer has scarcely entered into competition and the prices paid the Japanese are not less than the wages of American labor in the same lines. The demand for Japanese workers in household service and in canning establishments has also been great and unsatisfied.

From the fisheries which the Japanese have almost monopolized in British Columbia and in Hawaii, they have been virtually excluded by statutes limiting the fisheries of California, Oregon and Washington to citizens of these States. Unless born in the United States the Japanese cannot become citizens.

A large portion of the Japanese laborers avoided the orchards and established themselves in the cities where, as laundrymen, restaurant keepers, draymen, carpenters and the like, they entered thus into competition with the American laborers, the most of whom in San Francisco were recent immigrants from Europe.

Their lower scale of living and their peculiarities in other ways soon brought them under the condemnation of the trade unions. Anti-Japanese societies were formed and much effort was spent to the end of the exclusion of Japanese and Korean laborers as the Chinese had already been excluded. The personal violence which accompanied the anti-Chinese campaign of twenty years before was practically absent from this. The Japanese were better able to take care of themselves and also, in spite of much reckless talk and exaggeration of language, there was very little real enmity toward the Japanese with any class of their opponents. Most of the unfriendly talk was for political purposes and the main cause of opposition was economic.

An exclusion act like that directed against the Chinese could not be considered by our government. It would be a needless affront to a friendly nation, and a nation willing to do anything we may desire, provided it could be done with dignity. The Chinese exclusion act finds its excuse perhaps in the fact that China is not yet a nation. No absolute monarchy can be a nation, in the proper sense. When China finds herself at last, this exclusion act must wholly change its form.

In this condition of affairs, a definite agreement was made with the Katsura ministry of Japan, that no passports for America were to be issued to Japanese laborers, that the responsibility for discrimination should rest with Japan, and that all holders of Japanese passports should be admitted without question. This agreement has been loyally and rigidly kept by Japan. A bit too rigidly perhaps, for it is growing increasingly difficult for Japanese students to come to America. The diffusion among our American universities of Japanese students, eager, devoted and persistent has been one of the most important factors in maintaining the mutual good will and good understanding of the two nations. For everywhere these Japanese graduates of American universities give a good account of themselves standing high in the estimation of their people at home, while retaining a keen interest and intelligent sympathy in all American affairs.

The present settlement of the immigration question is the very best possible, so long as restriction of any sort is regarded as necessary. It is in the interest of both nations and of all concerned, and the occasional efforts to supersede it by a general "oriental exclusion" bill are prompted by no consideration of the public welfare.

To be grouped with the inchoate nations of Asia as "orientals" is particularly offensive to the proud, self-governing Japanese. In their thoughts and ambitions, in their attitude towards peace and justice and toward modern civilization the Japanese are in full harmony with the nations of Europe. It is their mission to bring modern civilization to Asia. This they are literally doing in Korea

one of the most interesting experiments in the reclamation of a dying nation undertaken in modern times, comparable to our sanitation of the Canal Zone of Panama. At the same time, the hold of Japan on Korea, like our hold on Panama, rests on an act of arbitrary seizure.

The main justification of the exclusion of Japanese unskilled laborers must be found in the economic conditions on the two sides of the Pacific. It is our theory in America that there should be no permanent class of unskilled laborers. and that it is each man's duty as well as his right to rise to his highest possibility.

In most other nations, a permanent lowest class which must work for the lowest wages and do the menial service of society is taken for granted. This theory is affirmed in the Chinese proverb. "Big fish eat little fish, little fish eat shrimp: shrimp eat mud." It is no part of our policy that shrimps should remain shrimps forever. Cheap labor is exploitable to the injury of labor of a higher grade. There is then justice in the contention for the exclusion of the cheapest and most exploitable type of laborers whatever their race or the country from which they come.

There is also legitimate ground for fear that a wide open door from Asia would crowd our Pacific coast before the natural population of America has found its way there. Such a condition would add to the economic wealth of the coast at the expense of social and political confusion.

Many honest men fear the advent of large numbers of Japanese as likely to provoke racial troubles similar to those which exist in the South. I do not share this opinion. No race is more readily at home in our civilization than the cultivated Japanese. That the rice-field coolie does not assimilate is mainly because of his crude mentality and his lack of any training either Japanese or American. This is broadly true, though among these people are many of fine instincts and marked capacity. The condition of mutual help and mutual tolerance in Hawaii shows that men of a dozen races can get along together if they try to do so. The problem of the South is the problem of slavery; the problem of the half-white, the man with the diverging

instincts of two races, this status changed in an instant, by force, from the position of a chattel to that of a citizen. It is the problem of the half-white man given political equality when social equality is as far away as ever. No bar sinister of this sort nor of any other kind separates the European from the Japanese.

Social reasons for exclusion have a certain value. The Japanese are the most lovable of people, which fact makes them the most clannish. They have the faults of their virtues, and the uneducated Japanese sometime show these faults in unpleasant fashion.

There are still more urgent reasons why the Japanese themselves should insist on exclusion of their coolie laborers from Canada and the United States. The nation cannot afford to have America know it by its least creditable examples. A hundred Japanese rice-field hands are seen in America, to one Japanese gentleman. Thousands of men who never knew a Japanese merchant or artist or scholar have come in contact with Japanese draymen or laundrymen. They have not always found these good neighbors. The present conditions are not permanent, perhaps, but as matters are today it is to the interest of Japan, even more than to the interest of California that the present agreements should be maintained.

Just after the Russian war, when America's sympathy was almost wholly on the side of Japan because the attitude of Russia was believed to be that of wanton aggression, a series of anti-Japanese articles were published in various American newspapers. Who wrote these articles and who paid for them I do not know, but their various half-truths and falsehoods had an unfavorable effect on American public opinion.

The school affair in San Francisco was also unfortunate, although in itself of no significance whatever. In the great fire of 1906, the Chinatown of San Francisco was entirely destroyed. After the fire a temporary school house was established in the neighborhood. There were no Chinese children in this school and the teacher, perhaps fearing loss of position, asked the school board to send the Japanese children

in the neighboring region to her. The school board apparently ignorant of possible international results formed of this an "Oriental School." There were no Chinese children concerned nor is it clear that Japanese children would have suffered even had such been present.

Under our treaty with Japan our schools as every other privilege were open to Japanese subjects on the basis of "the most favored nation." To send Japanese children to an "Oriental School" was probably a violation of this clause of the treaty. It is not certain that this was a violation but it appears as such on the surface. So far as I know, there has been no judicial decision involving this point. In any case, the remedy lay apparently in an injunction suit, and in a quiet determination of the point at issue. It was a mistake, I believe, to make it a matter of international diplomacy. Neither the nation nor the State of California has the slightest control over the schools of San Francisco, unless an action of the school board shall traverse a national or State law or violate a treaty. A treaty has precedence over all local statutes. But the meaning of a treaty can be demonstrated only through judicial process.

The extravagance of the press in both nations stirred up all the latest partisanship in both races involved. On the one hand the injuries to the Japanese children were grossly exaggerated. On the other hand, gratuitous slanders were invented to justify the action of the school board. This action was finally rescinded at the request of the President of the United States who uttered at the same time a sharp reprimand to the people of California. This again was resented by the State, as only five of its citizens were responsible for the act in question, and the people of the State as a whole had no part whatever in anti-Japanese agitation nor any sympathy with the men temporarily in control of affairs in San Francisco. The net result of the whole affair was to alienate sympathy from Japan. This again was unfair for the Japanese nation as a whole had no responsibility for what, at the worst, was an error of judgment on the part of a few of its immigrants.

Since this affair was settled I have not heard a word as to the relation of the Japanese to the schools of San Francisco, and, I presume, that this difficulty, like most others has disappeared with time and patience and mutual consideration. It is not likely to be heard from again.

Only a word need be said of other matters which have vexed the international air. War scares are heard the world over. The world over they are set going by wicked men for evil purposes. In general the design of purveyors of international slanders is to promote orders for guns, powder and warships. There are other mischief makers, who hope to fish in troubled waters.

A few years ago it was suggested in America that the Manchurian railways, built on Chinese territory, by the governments of Russia and Japan should be sold to China. To this end China should borrow the money of an international syndicate under whose authority the railways should be managed. This line of action was for various reasons impossible to China. The suggestion itself was very unwelcome to the Japan authorities as well as to the Japanese people to whom the leased land between Port Arthur and Mukden is hallowed ground, holding the graves of a hundred and thirty thousand of the young men of Japan. The suggestion itself was personal only. It was never acted upon, never approved by the American people and no official action was ever based upon it, and it should not be a subject of worry to either Russia or Japan.

The fur seal question has been under discussion for more than twenty years, ever since the wanton killing of females at sea first threatened the destruction of the Bering Sea herds. By the pelagic sealing of Canada the number of breeding seals in the Pribilof herd was reduced from about 1,000,000 to about 180,000. The entrance of Japan into Bering Sea, disregarding the regulations of the Paris tribunal for the protection of the herd, inadequate as these were, soon reduced these numbers to about 30,000. Last year, a treaty was concluded, Russia, Japan, Canada and the United States being parties to it, by which the matter was honorably and justly settled and the continuance and restoration of the

three herds, American, Russian, and Japanese finally assured. There is not now a single cloud above the official horizon as between the United States and Japan. There have never been any real difficulties and the apparent ones are no greater than must appear wherever great nations border on each other. As the Japanese are fond of saying: The Pacific Ocean unites our nations. It does not separate.

War talk on either side is foolish and criminal. Japan recognizes the United States as her nearest neighbor among western nations, her best customer and most steadfast friend. Her own ambitions and interests lie in the restoration of Korea, the safeguarding of her investments in Manchuria and in the part she must play in the unforetold future of China. For her own affairs she needs every yen she can raise by any means for the next half century. For the future greatness of Japan depends on the return of "the old peace with velvet sandalled feet," which made her the nation she is today.

War and war demands have made her, for the time being, relatively weak, she who once was strong in her spirit of progress, her freedom from debt and in the high ambition of her people. Thirteen hundred millions of dollars in war debt is a burden not lightly carried. Through peace and through peace alone Japan will regain her strength, and none know this better than the men of the wise and patriotic group who now control Japan.